



www.epa.gov/OWOW/heritage/rivers.html

The American Heritage Rivers Initiative program was announced by the White House in 1998 as a new program to help communities restore and revitalize waters and waterfronts. Americans will look more in the future to our rivers as a source for improving community life. This initiative will integrate the economic, environmental and historic preservation programs and services of federal agencies to benefit communities in efforts to protect their rivers.

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Fact Sheet/March 2000

Woonasquatucket & Blackstone Rivers



What Makes the Blackstone and Woonasquatucket Rivers Special?

- The watersheds flow into Providence Harbor and meet to form the headwaters of Narragansett Bay. The combined area includes the 64 miles of both rivers, 26 communities in two states, over 450,000 acres and serves one million people.
- The two river areas range from pristine rural landscapes to inner-city neighborhoods with historic central business districts of Worcester and Providence.
- Some reservoirs on the rivers are drinking water sources for RI and MA.

Why Were These Rivers Selected for the American Heritage River Initiative (AHRI)?

- Every city and town within the two watersheds supported the nomination.
- The two rivers provided excellent examples within all key categories: historic and cultural, economic and environmental.
- Partnerships exist between river communities, businesses, environmental organizations and other civic associations with accomplishments already in addressing the many concerns of both watersheds.
- Was one of 124 nominations nationally solicited and one of 14 rivers ultimately selected by President Clinton.

Progress/Goals for the Future

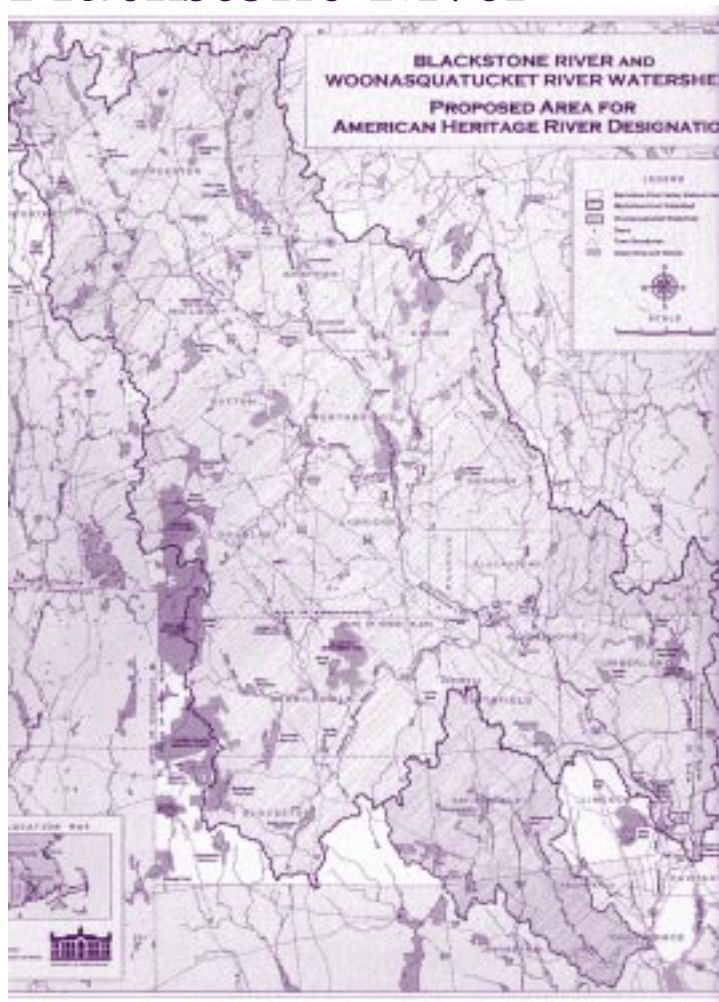
What Partnership Progress Has Been Made?

- EPA hired the a full-time "River Navigator" position, Johanna Hunter. Navigator's role is to help communities identify federal or state programs and resources to help carry out action plans for the rivers.
- In July 1999, an agreement was signed documenting the commitment of 13 federal partners to assist in the American Heritage Rivers initiative.
- The River Navigator and River Pilots (federal and state representatives) began to prioritize action items and highlight opportunities for partnerships and resources for both rivers.

What EPA Actions Are Planned for 2000?

- **Wetlands and streambank restoration:** Assist with implementation of stream bank improvements on 2 projects in Providence.
- **Technical assistance and pollution prevention:** Provide forums and target key industries within watersheds to reduce stormwater runoff pollution.
- **Develop a State of the Watershed Report.** EPA will work with RIDEM to prepare a Woonasquatucket River "State of the Watershed Report."
- **Target environmental projects related to enforcement actions:** With input from Woonasquatucket communities, the EPA will have an updated list of possible supplemental projects and will follow up on problem areas identified during a river reconnaissance.

Blackstone River



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Who are the Partners?

Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor • The Providence Plan • Massachusetts Audubon Society • Blackstone Valley Tourism Council • Blackstone River Watershed Association • Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce • Governors of Rhode Island and Massachusetts • 26 Communities in Blackstone-Woonasquatucket area • EPA New England • US Fish and Wildlife • US Army Corps of Engineers • Federal Highway Administration • Housing and Urban Development • Economic Development Agency, Dept. of Commerce • US Geological Survey • Federal Emergency Management Agency • National Marine Fisheries Service • National Park Service • Univ. of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension • Univ. of Connecticut Cooperative Extension • USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service • USDA Forest Service • USDA - Rural Development for states of MA and RI • USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for the states of MA and RI • USDA Farm Service Agency for the states of MA and RI.

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What Are the Long Term Goals?

- **Blackstone:** restoring water levels, achieving fishable and swimmable status, restoring migratory fisheries, completing ten restoration projects and developing mechanisms to address open space and growth issues.
- **Woonasquatucket:** a comprehensive watershed plan for improving water quality; implementing stream bank and wetlands restoration projects throughout the watershed; and establishing heritage trails and greenway areas to highlight the historic, cultural and recreational opportunities.

What is the American Heritage River Initiative?

- A community-based program utilizing the vision and partnerships within the watersheds to target opportunities for change and improvement.
- Designated rivers receive federal assistance for up to five years in the form of refocused programs and technical assistance.
- Rivers to demonstrate tangible gains in economic revitalization, environmental restoration, cultural and historic preservation and recreational improvements.



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Note: EPA-New England offers businesses and municipalities information and assistance to improve compliance with environmental laws and be better stewards of their local environment. Please call to learn how EPA can help.